

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 01773 251725Z

47

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COMSIXTHFLT

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, OCLR, GR, US

SUBJECT: VISIT TO PIRAEUS OF SIXTH FLEET FLAG SHIP LITTLE ROCK

REF: (A) USDAO ATHENS (DTG 250950Z FEB 76) (NOTAL)

(B) ATHENS 1529 (DTG 191215Z FEB 76)

SUMMARY: IN ORDER TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND OF EVENTS DESCRIBED IN REF A, EMBASSY IN THIS MESSAGE SUMMARIZES THE DEVELOPMENTS WHICH LED TO THE CURRENT SITUATION AND WHICH PRODUCED THE AMBASSADOR'S RECOMMENDATION PROVIDED THEREIN, THAT THE VISIT OF THE LITTLE ROCK TO PIRAEUS BE CARRIED OUT BUT WITHIN PERIOD MARCH 3-6 RATHER THAN MARCH 3-8 AS ORIGINALLY PROPOSED BY COMSIXTHFLT. THIS MESSAGE SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A COMPANION PIECE TO REF A AND READ IN LIGHT OF MORE GENERAL DISCUSSION OF SIXTH FLEET SHIP VISITS TO GREECE, PROVIDED IN REF B. END SUMMARY

1. THE PROPOSAL THAT COMSIXTHFLT VISIT GREECE AND PAY

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PAGE 02 ATHENS 01773 251725Z

CALLS RESULTED FROM A SPONTANEOUS COMMENT BY DEFMIN

AVEROFF IN MID-1975 SUGGESTING THAT HE WOULD WELCOME SUCH A VISIT. IN LIGHT OF THIS COMMENT, COMSIXTHFLT PROPOSED THAT THE LITTLE ROCK VISIT PIRAEUS NOVEMBER 15-20, 1975. WHEN CONFRONTED WITH A SPECIFIC VISIT REQUEST, HOWEVER, GOG DEMURRED, CITING THE COINCIDENCE OF THE PROPOSED VISIT DATES WITH THE NOVEMBER 18-19 SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1973 EVENTS AT THE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY. AS A RESULT, THE VISIT WAS DEFERRED. A LARGE DEMONSTRATION DID, IN FACT, TAKE PLACE COMMEMORATING THE NOVEMBER 1974 EVENTS AND INVOLVED A MASSIVE MARCH WHICH TERMINATED AT THE EMBASSY.

2. FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF A VISIT BY THE LITTLE ROCK, WITH COMSIXTHFLT EMBARKED, WAS DEFERRED UNTIL EARLY 1976 AT THE EMBASSY'S SUGGESTION. IN JANUARY 1976, THE POSSIBILITY OF A VISIT BY LITTLE ROCK, THIS TIME FOR MARCH, AGAIN CAME UNDER CONSIDERATION. AT THE AMBASSADOR'S DIRECTION, ALUSNA UNDERTOOK TO EXPLORE THIS INFORMALLY AND UNOFFICIALLY WITH THE STAFFS OF THE HELLENIC NAVY AND THE SUPREME HELLENIC ARMED FORCES COMMAND (SHAFC). SURPRISINGLY, THE REACTION TO THESE FEELERS WAS RAPID, SPECIFIC AND POSITIVE, WITH DETAILS OF TIMING OF PROJECTED CALLS ON CHIEF HELLENIC NAVY, CINCelfor, AND MOD AVEROFF AND THEIR READINESS TO ACCEPT INVITATIONS GIVEN AS PART OF THE RESPONSE. IT WAS CLEAR THAT DEFMIN AVEROFF PERSONALLY ENDORSED THE POSITIVE RESPONSE. SUBSEQUENTLY ALUSNA, WITH THE AMBASSADOR'S CONCURRENCE, SUBMITTED TO THE HNC THE USUAL FORMAL, WRITTEN PORT VISIT REQUEST WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT FORMAL APPROVAL WOULD BE A PRO FORMA MATTER. AT THIS POINT, PM CARAMANLIS AND SOME OF HIS ADVISORS BEGAN TO HAVE RESERVATIONS CULMINATING IN THE MEETING OF MONDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 23, WHOSE RESULT IS DESCRIBED IN PARA 4 OF REF A.

3. HAD THE GREEK AUTHORITIES INDICATED TO THE ALUSNA WHEN HE APPROACHED THEM INFORMALLY AND UNOFFICIALLY IN JANUARY THAT THEY FORESAW POTENTIAL PUBLIC SECURITY DIFFICULTIES IF THE VISIT WERE TO TAKE PLACE, OR THAT THE GOG BELIEVED THE VISIT TO BE PREMATURE FROM A DOMESTIC CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ATHENS 01773 251725Z

POLITICAL VIEWPOINT, WE WOULD HAVE RECOMMENDED AGAINST PRESSING THE GOG AT THIS TIME TO ACCEPT SUCH A VISIT. HOWEVER, (A) SINCE THE AMBASSADOR BELIEVES THAT U.S. NAVY SUPPORT OF AND COOPERATION WITH GREECE IS SO IMPORTANT, (B) BECAUSE IN HIS OPINION THE U.S. NAVY HAS BEEN LEAST WELL TREATED BY THE GREEKS OF ALL THE U.S. MILITARY SERVICES, AND (C) BECAUSE OF THE STRONG, ALMOST ENTHUSIASTIC INITIAL GOG REACTION TO THE PROPOSED SIXTH

FLEET FLAGSHIP VISIT, THE AMBASSADOR BELIEVES THE VISIT
SHOULD TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED, ALTERED ONLY TO REDUCE
ITS LENGTH FROM FIVE TO THREE DAYS FOR THE REASONS
EXPLAINED IN REF A.

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